

Findings and Recommendations for the ABS Disability Questions – September 2021

➤ **Does [Owner X] have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of their major life activities?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Findings:

- The answer categories for this question are comprehensive. None of the participants could think of any other ways in which this question could be answered.
- Participants are comfortable answering this question in terms of sensitivity. Participants did not feel that this question was overly intrusive.
- Some participants asked if this question was asking in a “business sense” or in “everyday life.” For instance, does the physical or mental impairment substantially limit one of more of their major life activities that relate to the business or just in general?

Recommendations:

- No recommendations at this time.

➤ **Because of a health problem or disability, does Owner X have serious difficulty with one or more of the following? *Select all that apply.***

- Hearing, even when using a hearing aid(s)
- Seeing, even when wearing glasses
- Concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Walking or climbing stairs
- Don't know

Findings:

- Participants felt like this question was more intrusive than the previous question (Does [Owner X] have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of their major life activities?) because it asked about the specific nature of the disability.
- For proxy reporters that were close to the owner (i.e., family members), they felt like they could answer this question without needing to speak to the owner or anyone else in the business as

they would have knowledge of that information as well as the liberty to disclose that information to the Census Bureau. However, for non-family proxy reporters, they felt like they would need to ask the owner because sometimes they would not know the answer and/or they wouldn't know if the owner would be comfortable sharing this information with the Census Bureau.

- Some participants expressed that disabilities of a physical nature are more obvious and less sensitive to disclose than those of a mental nature.
- Some participants felt like the disability questions were only sensitive IF the owner has a disability.
- Some participants felt comfortable sharing this information while some did not. Businesses that were designated by the government (state/federal) as "service-disabled veteran-owned" felt more comfortable answering questions about disability because in a way it's already public information.
- Some participants mentioned that there were potentially missing answer categories here. One participant indicated that they felt like mental health issues were a missing answer category here (i.e., bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety, etc.). Another participant mentioned that there were not categories for upper body/upper limb disabilities which can also create serious difficulties.
- Some participants who explained that the business was a service-disabled veteran-owned business answered no to all of the disability questions. When further probed, they explained that veteran disability status can come in many different forms. For instance, if a Veteran served in Vietnam and later developed cancer or cardiac diseases, they would deem Vietnam as a contributing factor and the veteran would be eligible for a disabled designation.
- Some participants asked why the Census Bureau is asking questions about disability.

Recommendations:

- If there is not an explanation for why we are asking disability questions, we recommend adding one so that participants know why this information is relevant and important to us.

The Census Bureau has reviewed this product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and has approved the disclosure avoidance practices applied. Approval ID: CBDRB-FY21-ESMD006-018.